

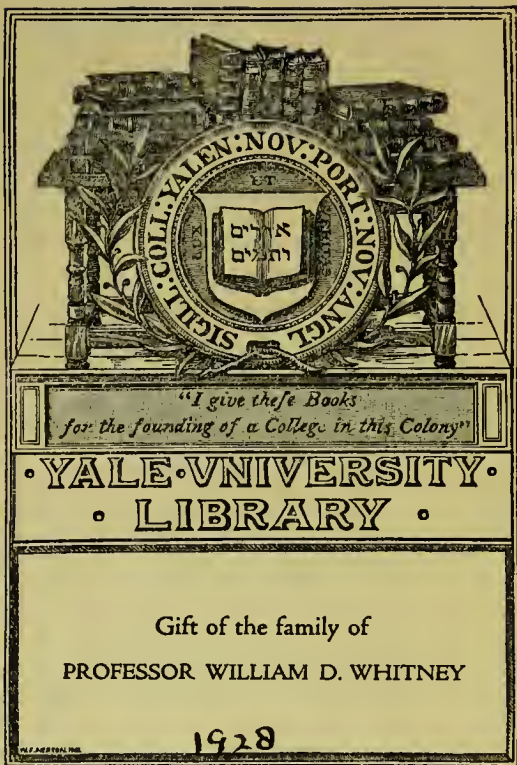
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MY PILGRIMAGE TO COUÉ

ELLA BOYCE KIRK





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*"Day by day, in every way,
I am getting better and better."*

MY PILGRIMAGE
TO COUÉ

BY

ELLA BOYCE KIRK



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500 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK

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TO MY NIECE
ELLA RUTH BOYCE
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
THROUGH HER ENCOURAGEMENT AND CONSTANT
ATTENTION DURING MY VISIT TO NANCY, SHE
HAS MADE POSSIBLE THE WRITING OF THIS
TRUTH OF MY HEALING BY EMILE COUÉ

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(Letter from Emile Coué to the Author)

Nancy, le 5 août 1922

Chère Madame,

Je vous remercie pour ce que vous m'avez écrit
d'avoir pu contribuer à votre guérison.
Si rapide. Si vous continuez travailler
à faire votre suggestion de motiver le
du soir, rien n'empêchera vos autres
le retour de vos exercices, mais encore
vous éviterez la venue de nouvelles
qui vous gêneraient sans cesse.

Une seule chose je me propose
pas à ce que vous puissiez à un
moment de votre vie à vos amis mais encore
cela me fera grand plaisir, puisque
vous contribuerez ainsi à répandre
mes idées.

À vous pour toujours chère Madame,
vos dévoués les plus amicaux

E. Coué

(Translation)

NANCY, August 5th, 1922.

DEAR MADAM:

Rest assured that I am very happy to have been able to contribute to your very rapid cure. If you will *always* continue making your morning and evening suggestion, not only will you avoid the recurrence of your cramps, but you will also avoid the coming of those maladies that are ever lurking for us.

Not only am I not opposed to your speaking of my method to your friends, but, on the contrary, it would give me great pleasure, since you would thus contribute to spreading my ideas.

I beg of you, Madame, to accept my most friendly greetings,

(Signed) EMILE COUÉ.

*“Our actions spring not from our Will, but
from our Imagination.”*

EMILE COUÉ

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CHAPTER I

EMILE COUÉ OF NANCY

DAY by day, to the minds of more and more people, there is coming a familiarity with the names Coué and Nancy. The two are becoming linked in the popular ear as almost interchangeable, and to the popular mind they are synonymous with all that is good and beneficent in human life. To-day, in Nancy, France, whether seeking relief from physical disability, or whether interested in studying the problems of the human mind; whether attracted by the novel and surprising, or whether genuinely in sympathy with what is being done by the little French apothecary, one may find under the teaching of Monsieur Coué power and knowledge that will interest, surprise and heal.

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For some time, the American newspapers and magazines have been instrumental in familiarizing the public with Monsieur Coué and his work through articles and reviews of his one small published work in English, "Self-Mastery Through Conscious Autosuggestion," as well as of numerous books dealing with him and his almost miraculous cures through the power of the mind. So interesting and convincing are the accounts given, so sincere and unassuming, that to one suffering from any ailment of the flesh the idea of sailing forth to see what there is to be seen comes most naturally. When the means are at hand no time is lost in carrying out the idea, especially when one is harassed by torturing physical pain that saps one of the very desire to live.

Through the medium of the newspapers the name Coué came to be as familiar as that of a household classic. Whenever anyone complained

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of a physical ailment the first question asked was surely: "Why, haven't you heard of Coué? Don't you know of his wonderful method of healing through autosuggestion? You must try it. It will surely help you."

The remarkable part of it was that whenever Coué's name was mentioned or his treatment discussed it was always with the utmost faith and respect. The people who spoke of it were sure of what they said, and could substantiate their statements with facts. There was never any of that reluctance to bare details, never any of that reticence to come to the point, that accompanies charlatanism in general. Everyone who ever spoke of Coué and his work did it with the utmost freedom, gave minute information and did not hesitate to lend his personal assistance in effecting a cure by revealing the way autosuggestion was practiced. There always existed that enthusiasm that comes with success—and Coué's

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method, as I discovered later, in affections that did not entail organic malformations or broken bones, was successful in ninety cases out of one hundred.

There is always something in the attitude of the person upon whom a theory is tried that either reflects favorably or detracts from its validity. In all cases where the Coué method was tried, the attitude was one of satisfaction and gratitude. The individual radiated a desire to spread the idea and inform the world of the wonders that could be accomplished by a method so simple that it might at first seem ridiculous. There was ever something about him akin to the fervor of the Christians in ancient Rome who had seen the light and were eager to open the eyes of those who were still in the dark. There was always in him a beautiful faith that communicated itself to others.

Surely all this could not be in-

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spired by anything that was not basically good and true! Truth ever shines by its own light. All else is a futile spark that dazzles for a moment and then is extinguished. The truth of Coué's marvelous method has in it the very essence of sunlight in its goodness and beneficence. If only it were as widely diffused how much happier the world would be!

When I heard of Coué for the first time it was in a dark period of trial and stress, a period during which I was suffering excruciating physical pain and the no less torturing pain of scepticism and hopelessness. I had tried every available method of cure to rid myself of my physical disability, but strive as I might, I could accomplish nothing. I had reached the stage when I was about to resign myself to the worst, when the names Coué and Nancy came to me like two good geniuses leading me to health and happiness. I was not long in availing myself of the promises they

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held out to me, and now, thanks to them, I am able to publish my thankfulness and gratitude to the world instead of dragging my life away in embittered invalidism in the narrow confines of a basket-chair.

This personal experience of my trip to Monsieur Coué at Nancy is written for the benefit, rather, moral support, of all those who are suffering from the ills to which flesh is heir, and who, like myself, have lost faith, and possibly hope. It is also an expression of gratitude for the wonderful effects that resulted from my trip to Nancy, and a humble tribute to the marvelous work of Monsieur Coué. I cite nothing that I did not personally observe, or in which I did not play a small part. So, my purpose stated, I shall launch my labor of love, begging of the reader the same tolerance St. Augustine asked for,—that he judge the spirit and not the word. . . .

CHAPTER II

A THUMBNAIL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

THERE were two normal and inescapable ailments to which I had long been a conscientious autosuggestionist before going to Coué; namely, my age and my weight. Like most women, I knew how to ignore both of them so long as I felt young enough to care about life and activity and was not too stout to climb the stairs to the entrance of my hotel with average ease. If I could still enter a taxicab comfortably or occupy the allotted space in a theatre, I was content to press on from day to day with undaunted spirits.

“Cast your burdens on the Lord” had always been my guiding precept when dealing with problems that touched the sensibilities. I was content to allow my worries to dissipate in due time with the help of moral

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fortitude. However, with respect to merely fleshly troubles of wrinkles and excess tissue, I never cared to take my case beyond local jurisdiction. It seemed preferable to pay the masseuse and the hopefully named "Beauty Specialist" to set to rights the attrition of time and age. It was wiser to let the tailor wage the slowly losing battle between "slenderizing lines" and the broadening influences of nature if he chose. I was prepared to pay my price and take my discounts. It is a sane philosophy to keep the mind off the external signs of accumulative years and to occupy it instead with broad human interests.

Always in my life I have observed an attitude of optimism and self-reliance. Seldom have I publicly or among my friends sought sympathy or support for any trial that I have ever undergone,—and they have not been few. However, so long as I was able to avoid foolish fretting in

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matters of health, so long as I could hold my own with moderate success with age and infirmity, I was happy in the fact of my continued mental activity. Perhaps a little like an old book,—the binding scuffed and faded, the pages yellow, the print a little antique,—I felt, nevertheless, that my contents were imperishable and unchanged.

Indeed, were I to look disinterestedly upon my case, my years were in some ways an advantage. I could go wherever I chose, alone or with any companion, without fear and without scandal. My mature dignity was a sufficient guarantee of disinterestedness. I could be as curious as I chose about any person or event without being committed or compromised. I could even evince interest for Freud and psychoanalysis without seeming to exhibit a complex.

Truly, it is an ill wind that bloweth nobody any good. Even my weight, judging everything impersonally, had

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its compensations. Traffic policemen, taxi drivers, bell boys and shopkeepers paid me the deference that plain people always render to mere size. I cannot say that I did not have pangs of suffering from my condition, but the real sorrows and embarrassments of overweight I kept closely concealed in my own heart. The apparent burdens could be conveniently utilized to avoid anything I desired to shirk.

Withal, I led an active and satisfying life, full of little tasks and duties. My days and evenings were filled to the last minute with calls and shopping, lectures, theatres and concerts. I combined harmoniously the useful and the pleasant, thus arriving at a satisfying balance. No middle-aged buyer, of the proverbial kind, lived any more actively while in New York than I did habitually in my own way. My hotel rooms were a rendezvous for all my out-of-town

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friends. What is more, I kept continually the pace they were able to strike only on occasion.

Sometimes, it is true, I had to rush into new activities to forget the fact that I was bored with the life I was leading, as compared to my activities in my earlier youth. Often I felt keenly that my movements lacked point and continuity. When I contrasted my life as a mere consumer long since out of touch with the labor of producing—when I thought of myself in retrospect, first, as the first woman school superintendent in America, then, as an active social factor in the life of my home city,—when I allowed my mind to look back upon what had been, I did indeed feel idle and unhappy. If you can fancy yourself remaining at a public ball after your own party and friends have gone home, you will appreciate the bitterness of loneliness and boredom that came to me. Time may soften the grief of impotence, but it

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also lengthens the shadows of the past.

As time goes on, one meets, indeed, travelling companions on the way, but they, like oneself, are busy with time-killing occupations while loitering on the wayside between the homes they have left and the Ultimate Destination.

In moments of relaxation such considerations came to me strongly. Often while I was preoccupied with my petty infirmities I would ask myself, "Why attempt to prolong and beguile an interlude between life and death?" Had I not said and meant it that that person was fortunate whose life came suddenly to an end at fifty? Oh, how I should have welcomed at those moments a summons to go elsewhere! With what pleasurable excitement and importance I would have greeted the doctor's announcement that I had just a month in which to wind up my affairs!

CHAPTER III

FORESHADOWINGS OF MY INFIRMITY

DURING that period I seldom really saw a doctor, but I never greeted one without the special interest that one takes in a person with whom one is shortly to have important business. In spite of the fact that to all appearances I was cheerful and active most of the time, I possessed a kind of dreary, fussy activity, a hectic intensity that offered me little solace. A genuine thrill, I knew, awaited me,—the doctor's dramatic announcement some day that I must prepare myself for a long journey. Probably it would be heralded by toxicuraemia. Probably the heart would give way; for how could it be as healthy as it seemed?

But alas, even for the high ambitions of age! The doctor's surprise for me was genuine, but it was not

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heroic and thrilling. It was merely tragic. He told me that I was shortly going to be unable to walk! At that moment I felt all the disillusion of Hedda Gabler when she hears that the man whom she expected to do things beautifully, with vine-leaves in his hair, has shot himself vulgarly in the bowels!

From what the doctor said, a brief period of gradually restricted activity lay before me, and then an indeterminate sentence of invalidism, while, chained to a bed, or helped about from chair to chair, I patiently waited until my pain was appeased!

What a ghastly discounting of the hope of death! What a disgusting termination of an active life—to remain a useless burden, an invalid, when one had expected to leave dramatically,—a useful and an interesting individual to the very last minute!

However, everything considered, the doctor's verdict should not have surprised me. For approximately

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fifteen years I had suffered occasionally with both limbs from a malady that seemed to be due to gradual stiffening of the muscles. It was sometimes attended by cramps above the knees. Any difficulty in walking that I experienced in this way, however, was always attributed not only by my doctor, but even by myself, to the fact that I was so heavy. The doctor invariably prescribed rest and diet, though frankly, it seemed to me that it was the more judicious thing to do, to set about making all possible sacrifices to reduce my weight.

In spite of my resolutions, visiting friends and hotel menu cards conspired to make me defer all resolve to reduce. I have lived for years on a prescription of milk and vichy, and an actual diet of broiled squab *sous cloche*. Many a morning I have gone downstairs to a breakfast that began with a cup of hot water and ended with sausage and wheat cakes.

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One day, most unexpectedly, the trouble I had experienced with my knees showed new developments that seemed grave enough to demand serious attention. Pains so intense as to cause me to lose all consciousness, and swellings so gross as to interfere with my walking challenged notice. The doctors came and diagnosed. One said dropsy; another, rheumatism. All decreed that probably, at my time of life, it was incurable. With rest and diet I could perhaps bring about reduction of the swelling, but it was nevertheless probably futile to expect that I should again walk with the old freedom.

Just what the doctors promised and what they failed to maintain, just what the extent of my suffering was from that time on for the last two years it is not interesting or important to detail. The significance of the trouble for me, indeed, was not physical, but spiritual. I was concerned, not with what it meant in

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terms of bodily suffering, but in terms of isolation. It seemed only a matter of months till I would be cut off entirely not only from my pleasurable employments, but even from my friends; it looked like a question of long years until the bleakness of inactivity would be terminated.

From this juncture my whole tenor of life suddenly developed a new interest and value. Was it possible that I had ever been bored? Could I actually have desired to die while I still had the opera, the first nights, and the round of pleasures that was always planned for me whenever I revisited my home city? Was it really I who had pretended to feel that such frequent visits from out-of-town friends were an imposition and an affliction? It was with a pang that I saw myself cut off from these very friends, made dearer to me by the impending possibility of losing them.

CHAPTER IV

MY EFFORTS TO RETAIN HEALTH

NEVERTHELESS, I took the doctors' advice and arranged for diet and relaxation. There was only one way of getting a complete change, namely, by withdrawing from the hectic life of New York, away from hotels, away from amusements, away from the friends I loved so well and who had come to mean so very much to me.

As soon as I came to my decision, I packed up and departed for the quiet, rural section of Maine where I was born, and where I had not lived for lo, these many years.

Needless to say, my country relatives were astonished to see me, accustomed as they were to associating me with bright lights and intense living. Therefore it was with a certain degree of diffidence that they re-

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ceived the announcement of my intention to live a rigorously simple life with them for six months, if need be. As it was, I remained with them from May until December, making every effort to regain by abstemiousness and quiet the privilege of again playing a part in the activities of New York.

The effort was not wholly without reward. It brought me again into contact with girlhood friends and long-neglected memories. I lived again the quiet, peaceful hours of my youth with all their soothing associations. It renewed my acquaintance with the peaceful, deep-thinking, patient people of the country, whose greatest concern was nature and the bounties of health and vigor that she held forth to them. On the whole, it made a little less terrible the prospect of ending my days where I had begun them. I was resigned to being an invalid waiting out my term in the silence of the Maine countryside.

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So much for the spiritual support. The experiment was otherwise a failure, for physically I grew not better, but worse. My resignation slowly waned. Again the desire to live, to be healthy, to have my share of constructive work, took possession of me. I decided at last, while there was still some breath left in me, still some power of locomotion, to devote all my forces to a more active attempt to recover the use of my limbs.

Following this decision, I returned to New York to put myself into the hands of physicians, masseurs, chiropractors, osteopaths,—of any one or anything that held out the least hope of a cure. I clutched desperately at every straw. Now, with my renewed interest to get well, life no longer seemed a bore. The activities that once threatened to pall on me now seemed passionately worth while.

Does this account, dear reader, lose interest for you? Do you urge me to get on to the end of my story?

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Perhaps you echo the aspiration of the deacon who replied to the query about his invalid wife, "Oh, yes, she's still sick. I wish she'd get well or do something!"

It is ever so. The healthy, active person can never appreciate the agony of the search for health of one who fears permanent disability, or contemplates a continued life of invalidism.

Before relating how I was cured of my infirmity, I believe it would be worth while to impress upon the reader that the physical pain itself played the least part in my affliction. It was the loneliness that was unbearable. It was the fear of being useless that chilled the heart. It was the sense of age and infirmity, creeping like a glacier over a sunny land, that desolated and defrauded my life of its capacity for joy. It would be poor praise indeed of any cure if it represented a mere surcease of pain,

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when despair itself had been the real malady.

I wish with all my heart that I could convey for the benefit of those afflicted with invalidism the lesson I learned through my trouble. Often the cross that an afflicted person bears is the attitude of his friends and relatives, who believe that the invalid suffers only from physical ailments, and that the essential thing to be done is to relieve him of pain and make him as comfortable as necessary. Often, to make this possible, the invalid is isolated from bright company, deprived of useful occupation, and is thus made utterly wretched at the thought that he is a burden upon those who wait on him and outdo themselves conspicuously in their kindnesses. True, it is very kind to show consideration for a person's physical well-being. But illness is most often mental. Indeed, it ought to be borne in mind by those who are well that no invalidism is

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unbearable if it is cheered by employment, interesting company, and a chance to render service. The chief duty of those who nurse the sick is to restore their mental health.

This lesson was brought home to me forcefully during the two years I fought to regain my world. My friends did their utmost to make me absolutely comfortable. I had a special chair built for me. I reclined upon cushions. I slept upon hot-water bags. Every contrivance for the ease of tortured flesh was procured for me. I ate my meals in my room. I lived upon the well-intentioned wishes of attendants. Yet I had but one object in life,—to fight off loneliness.

Looking back upon my decision to go to M. Coué, it seems to me as if it came as a last resort, when despair had all but set in. It is possible that I should have nourished some further hope of the remedies that were being tried before becoming discouraged

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altogether, but now it seems as if the thought of Coué came like an eleventh-hour reprieve.

At any rate, when I sent for my niece, saying: "Come with me; I'm going to Nancy to be treated by M. Coué," she did not hesitate or debate the merits of the idea for a moment. She knew that everything I could think of or do had been tried. The fact alone that I had hope enough in the enterprise to consent to face the hardships of a trip to France in my condition was in itself a justification for the journey.

Accordingly, we set sail on the 8th of July. Established in a special deck chair that had been built expressly to accommodate my poor, tortured body, I vowed not to leave it unless I was washed out to sea by a tidal wave.

CHAPTER V

MY FAITH IN FAITH CURES

THE existing appreciation on my part that some portion of my trouble was mental is clear from the fact that among other remedies I had already tried several varieties of religious faith cures. At this moment I have nothing to urge against them. In the light of my subsequent lessons from M. Coué, I have more respect for them now than before I went to him, for he convinced me that they are of value for many people. His explanation that they are sometimes efficacious because they often cause the patient to give himself curative auto-suggestions justifies them for those who can be convinced by their affirmations. However, they failed to help me, because I had no faith in them. Indeed, they antagonized me. When a new-thought lady,

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charging me five or ten dollars a call, would sit in my room unconsciously attending to minor details of her personal comfort and tell me that I had no pain, I was irritated, not cured. When she offered to give me absent treatments at the same rate, I found myself making mental calculations as to how many patients could be absent-treated at one and the same time, wondering whether a radio-broadcasting station, installed by such a healer, would not increase the profits of the business. I caught myself smiling inwardly at her naïveté and thought of the simple-minded Eastern dervish who devised an economical way of sending numerous prayers to God daily through the medium of a little hand-mill in which he placed sacred scrolls rolled in the form of pills. Instead of praying in good old dervish fashion he merely turned the crank, and the work was done.

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No, her method did not convince me. I had taught school in my younger days, with children as my patients, so to speak. I had not found it possible ever to impress them with anything by means of absent treatments. My experience, therefore, had given me a bias in favour of the personal touch.

The result was that though I clutched at M. Coué's treatment through autosuggestion as a last resort, I was a little diffident, in the bottom of my heart, as to what he really could do for me. I had seen enough of the faith-cure methods in America to make me somewhat skeptical.

It was in this state of mind that I went to France.

CHAPTER VI

THE JOURNEY TO COUÉ

ACROSS three thousand miles of ocean, and across almost the whole of France, to the city of Nancy we went, my niece and I, with the very definitely compelling idea that there I would find healing, possibly, but certainly one of the most interesting personalities in the world, judging from all I had read and heard of M. Coué.

The ride from Paris to Nancy is along the Marne valley, full of associations of the World War. The splendid vitality of the French people is very much in evidence in the tremendous amount of rebuilding that has already been accomplished in the ruined villages. Indeed, the wonder and admiration that we could not help but feel for the French nation,

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almost caused us to forget the main scope of our visit to Nancy.

At last we reached the city. The first thing that interested us was its beautiful iron work. The public squares, the buildings and the ancient gates exerted a fascination over us, for they were so different from what we were accustomed to seeing. It was interesting to find a statue to Stanislaus, the deposed king of Poland, and to learn that as the father-in-law of Louis XV of France he had been given the Duchy of Lorraine, of which Nancy was the principal city, when his own country was lost to him. It was gratifying to see how he had beautified that city. What caused us to marvel most of all was to find, glorified as later heroes of the town, the architect Heré and the ironsmith Lamour, whose buildings, gates and balconies are the greatest beauties of the city to-day.

Our interest, however, was in an individual, and not in civic beauty.

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We wished to see Coué. Few questions were necessary to locate him. His name seemed to be known by everyone in Nancy.

CHAPTER VII

FIRST MEETING WITH COUÉ

BRIGHT and early, the following day, we set out, along the Rue Jeanne D'Arc to the home of M. Coué. There we found an attractive house in the French style surrounded by a garden with a locked gate. At our ring the maid appeared and told us we had come too early. It was then about 8.30. Just then Madame Coué happened to pass by, coming from her beautiful and much-loved garden. When she heard that we were the Americans who had come all the way from New York just to consult M. Coué she seemed to agree with us that we were worthy some special attention. We were accordingly ushered into M. Coué's study. Not until much later did we learn how favoured we had been, for it was not the practice of M. Coué to see people

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privately. He gives so much of his time to the public clinics that the little which remains to him must be preserved for writing and the demands of his individual life.

It had seemed to us surely an unprecedented thing that anyone should, like us, have taken so long a trip for the purpose of seeing M. Coué. We were to learn later that not only were we not the first Americans whose interest in M. Coué and his work had led them to Nancy, but that his fame had even reached South Africa, so that at that very time patients from that distant place were there to consult him.

However, our concern for the moment was with the private interview, which presently we had with M. Coué. It was naturally of great interest to us to gauge the personality of a man so famous that his name was known the world over.

We had not been long in his study when M. Coué entered. How shall I

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depict him in words? Sixty-seven years young, short in stature, with a remarkably keen eye and a twinkling smile, he appears at first glance to be bent with age, but one flash of his merry smile instantly sets that impression to rest. One feels, to begin with, how unassuming he is; next, how sincere; and lastly, how assured. "You will be better," seems to be his most characteristic remark.

When he asked me what ailed me, I outlined to him my Via Crucis of ill-health. I told him how I had taken treatments with osteopaths, allopaths, chiropractors, even mentioning the ill-fated faith curés. I related of how all promised relief, but failed to give any. I remember telling him of how one had advised me, when I suffered most keenly with my limbs, to walk with my mind, and not with my legs, for he as well as many others maintained that I had no trouble with them at all.

M. Coué differed from them in

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that he recognized that I really did have a physical basis for the pain in my limbs, but he was of the opinion that most of it was in my belief. Thereupon I said to him:

“Why should this exist in my legs if it is simply a belief in my mind? Why should not my arms be also affected?”

He replied:

“Undoubtedly you had a weakness of the muscles of the legs and your belief strengthened it until it became an actual fact to you, as a source of great pain.”

When I asked him whether he could cure me he said:

“I shall cure you, Mrs. Kirk. I do not think you will have a recurrence of the cramps.”

When I asked him, later in the interview, about his method of cure, he said:

“Be sure, Mrs. Kirk, that I do not perform these cures that are attributed to me. Patients cure themselves

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every time. I just fertilize the mental soil, then make a few suggestions. If, then, the patient acts on these he will get well, if it is within the limits of possibility. There are many cases that come to me that cannot be cured. Broken tissues, loss of limbs, some cases of deafness, some cases of eye diseases are incurable."

He explained later that if the disease of the eye is a muscular one, he can cure it, but if there are liquid complications, he cannot.

At this moment, while we were discussing what could and what could not be cured, a lady entered with a large suitcase. The maid was expostulating with her and trying as best she could to prevent her from going further.

"M. Coué," cried the woman, pleading, "your portrait that I am painting is nearly finished."

M. Coué laughed boyishly, in the twinkling way peculiar to him, and said that the lady surely must be ad-

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mitted if she was painting his portrait.

We then withdrew, while he called after us:

“Be sure to sit in the garden until the patients come.”

So ended my first interview with M. Coué.

CHAPTER VIII

MY TREATMENT AND CURE BY COUÉ

MY personal experience in being treated by Monsieur Coué is so simple as to be unbelievable; nevertheless, it has resulted in so definite a change, has proven so decided a cure as to seem a miracle—a term that M. Coué greatly objects to. My treatment was as follows: He asked me at first to hold out my arms with my hands firmly clasped together and to repeat many times “I cannot open my hands.” At first I felt sure that I could unclasp them if I tried, showing that the belief “I cannot” was not yet fully established in my unconscious mind. We repeated this together many times, yet it was not wholly satisfactory because I really did not have the belief. However, he kindly said to me, “You do very

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well for the first time and I feel sure if you do exactly as I ask you to, that you will be cured."

Later in the morning, when I was with other patients, he asked me to try this again. This time I had a much more confident feeling that I was getting the idea of the belief "I cannot" that he desired I should have, and again he made the suggestion, "You will soon be well. All pain will cease." After the third trial I was conscious that the thoughts, "I cannot" and "I can," had complete mastery of my hands. Then my kind teacher said, "Do now as I tell you and you will soon be well; there will be no recurrence of the pain, no contraction of the muscles, no lack of nerve control."

Even then I did not believe it possible; it all seemed so simple as to be only a passing fancy. I repeated twenty times every morning and evening, as he asked me to do, "Day by day, in every way, I am getting

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better and better," sometimes adding, "and I am sure there will be no recurrence of the pain." M. Coué said there was no objection to making this specific suggestion, though it was not at all necessary. In less than a week I found that I could move about more easily and could do more things without conscious effort than I had been able to do for years. It was then that the real cure was effected. I could now sit for a long time without changing position. I could walk much more easily and after three months, during which time I have surely been getting better and better each day, there has been no recurrence of the pain and I walk as well and as easily as I did twenty years ago.

The method that brought about this result seems almost too simple to tell. I have stated the treatment in its entirety exactly as I received it. How simple it all sounds in the telling! You go to Monsieur Coué with

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an ailment, you return home, you seem to take up life when and as you left it seventeen years ago. And yet, it is not exactly so. Precisely what you suffered from was not so much a disease as a moral disaster; the cure has given you more than the absence of pain. Something positive has been gained—what M. Coué calls "Self-Mastery." You are led to see that life has more spiritual value than you had given heed to. It is this intangible gain that I am anxious to pass on to others. And it is with the hope that I can help create a better understanding of M. Coué's work gained by my own personal contact with him that I desire to make these observations of his system, which is certainly justified by results and guaranteed by the logic of science.

CHAPTER IX

COUÉ AND THE PEASANT CLINICS

IT seems that the day I saw M. Coué for the first time was reserved for peasants. We discovered that clinics are held and that regular hours are observed as follows: On two days a week, there are held what are known as the Peasants' Clinics; all other afternoons, except Sunday, clinics are held in his home or in his garden, the weather permitting, for other people.

The Peasants' Clinics are held all day long, in a little house in the garden, and so many people flock to them that four meetings are held, two in the morning and two in the afternoon. Sometimes these are doubled in number, when M. Coué takes one group while one of his followers takes another.

The garden is most attractive and

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the atmosphere is calm, serene and hopeful. The people begin to arrive long before the hour set, and place themselves in groups about the rooms of the little house in the garden, which is used for the peasants. It needs but a glance to see what has brought them hither; faces drawn with pain, the tortured look of mental distress, the twisted and bent frames supported by cane or crutch, all bear silent testimony to the need and the hope of relief. Soon M. Coué arrives. His manner is brisk, cheerful, even happy. His invariable practice is to give treatment in groups. Since he practices for his joy in the good he can accomplish (for it is an actual fact that he accepts no fees), he is free to dictate the terms under which he will treat people. The only terms he makes are that the patients shall come to public clinics. So here he is, as accessible as the air we breathe. No one is denied, and yet, in a sense, he is

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most inaccessible, for no matter what one's means or position, to see M. Coué, he must come to the group meetings.

There seems to be a double purpose underlying his regulation. First, it minimizes the possibilities of the patient's discussion of his own symptoms. To dwell upon symptoms is to make a suggestion, which is highly undesirable. We all know how characteristic it is to rehearse symptoms, particularly in the case of chronic invalids. However, in a large group it becomes practically impossible, and that is a first step toward eliminating an evil suggestion and substituting a good one. Next, M. Coué, in his whole attitude, reduces the importance of illness. He is cheerful. He even makes little jokes as he makes a round of the room. The second purpose in group meetings seems to be to strengthen the force of every good suggestion made. As M. Coué speaks to each one, and from practi-

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cally all the old patients come reports of improvement, this naturally acts upon the others to instil hope and confidence. So he goes about, having a few words with each. If he finds, as he almost always does, someone in acute pain, he stops a few moments to dispel it, by the following method:

The patient is asked to relax as much as possible and to sit quietly, perhaps touching the part of the body that is the seat of the pain. Then he is told to say over and over, rapidly, "C'est passé." M. Coué demonstrates how, by saying the words with the patient, and so rapidly does he speak that it sounds like a small buzz saw.

You may doubt the possibility of what I say, but it remains true that, over and over, we saw this method effective in action.

CHAPTER X

COUÉ'S METHOD OF AUTO-SUGGESTION

M. COUÉ, as is well known, maintains that the imagination is stronger than the will. His whole science is based upon this theory, and judging from his experiments it is a very workable theory indeed. To prove his point M. Coué is fond of trying a little experiment with several people in succession to demonstrate how powerful imagination really is. A person is asked to clasp his hands, pressing them together more and more tightly, until they fairly tremble. At the same time he is asked to say to himself, over and over, "I can't open them. I can't open them." Then, still holding this thought as firmly as possible, he is asked to try to open them. Of course, as long as he thinks he cannot, it is impossible

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for him to do so. This experiment cannot fail, for if the hands are unclasped it is because the patient decided he could do it.

The effect upon the onlooker is almost uncanny. It looks like magic, but it is easily apparent that it is only a simple demonstration of the power of the mental attitude. Perhaps the reader may have undergone a similar experience, or seen someone else struggle hard to do something, and yet powerless to effect it. As an instance we may take the effort needed to dive into the water for the first time from a spring-board. There the individual stands; he honestly wants to dive; he is ashamed not to. Surely nothing could be simpler. It looks a more difficult feat to stand, poised and trembling at the edge of the board, than to make the leap; and yet some fear, deep within him, holds him as though paralysed. A similar experience may be observed when one tries to cross a busy street.

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Unable to move hand or foot, one stands rooted with terror, exposing oneself to the very dangers one fears.

It is this same feeling of powerlessness that M. Coué evokes in one consciously in this experiment. Because of the feeling of the inability to do a certain thing, one actually is unable to do it. This experiment seems to me another proof of the deep wisdom of M. Coué, for in this way he causes the patient to realize the strength of his own thought, and the responsibility he has toward its proper direction.

The idea is next presented upon which the whole method of conscious autosuggestion is based. Before anyone can understand what it is, he must first of all realize the nature of his own mind, namely, that he has two selves. We have been prone to think that the conscious self, the one we know best, is the true self. It is only a very recent development in psychology that is bringing to the

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fore the other, really deeper and truer self, the Unconscious or Subconscious self. Even in the recent discoveries, much emphasis has been placed, however, on the Subconscious as something evil, to be subdued and controlled. M. Coué's attitude toward it is quite different.

First of all, let us consider what the unconscious does for us. There are many bodily and mental activities which we can consciously direct and alter; but there are many more, of greater importance, that we cannot control through the mind. These are more important because they are the fundamental life activities without which life could not continue. Breathing, the beating of the heart, the processes of digestion and many more, all come under that category.

We have always been more or less aware of the force of the subconscious. Literature abounds with recognition of a power within oneself, and yet often alien to one's real pur-

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poses. Indeed, if one set out with this idea in mind, one could not read a book without finding illustrations. To quote from Miss Cather's new book, *One of Ours*:

"The feeling of purpose, of fateful purpose, was strong in his breast."

McFee, in his new novel *Command*, says: "For he had of late discovered that a man can, in some curious subconscious way, keep his head in a swoon. Like a person who is under an anaesthetic, who is aware of his own pulsing, swaying descent into a hurried yet timeless oblivion, whose brain keeps an amused record of the absurd efforts of alien intelligences to communicate with him as he drops past the spinning worlds into darkness, and who is aware, too, of his own entire helplessness, a man can with advantage sometimes let himself be fooled."

Mark Twain in his *Autobiography* says:

"There are some books that refuse

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to be written. They stand their ground, year after year, and will not be persuaded. It is not because the book is not there and worth being written—it is only because the right form of the story does not present itself.”

It has always been recognised that under emotional stress we often seem to be quite other beings than we like to think we are, or, indeed, than we try to be. It is common to hear it said, “He was beside himself with rage or fear.” It has remained for M. Coué to discover the real nature of the unconscious, and to present it not as an evil genius, rising from the depths from time to time under emotional impulsion to defeat our most earnest purposes; but that it is a deep and vital force, capable of being educated and directed, provided that the laws under which it works are observed. Under those circumstances it may become a very fruitful source of power and peace.

CHAPTER XI

COUÉ AND THE SUBCONSCIOUS

M. COUÉ's method is to study the subconscious. His aim is to discover when it most clearly manifests itself, and how it operates. It is well known that it is during sleep that it is most active. As a matter of fact, it is never dormant, and when sleep lulls the conscious mind it is free to manifest itself. It is of course impossible for the conscious mind to get into touch with the unconscious during sleep, but there can be found certain moments during waking periods that correspond to the character of sleep. We find that in periods of complete relaxation. When day dreams come, there exists such a condition.

M. Coué, therefore, advocates that upon retiring, and also immediately upon waking, while the mind

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and body are as relaxed as possible, everyone should make to himself the general suggestion of well-being that is coming to be a household expression: "Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better." This is to be said twenty times. M. Coué also suggests the use of a string with twenty knots tied to it, for keeping the record, and the uttering of the words in as monotonous a tone as possible. In other words, what is known in psychology as voluntary or active attention should be reduced to a minimum; the conscious self is to be lulled to as quiescent a state as possible, short of actual sleep. M. Coué explains that any idea which we can succeed in having the subconscious accept will be realized in action, provided, however, that it is within the realms of the possible; for he realizes that the human body has limitations.

When dealing with his patients M. Coué assures them that they will be

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better. He mentions various cases present, speaking rather generally of particular symptoms, and saying that they will pass. It will be noted that in this particular his method is quite different from some others which heal also by suggestion, for he recognises the reality of pain and suffering. He does not say: "You have no pain," but "You will be better." This calls forth no antagonistic suggestion in the unconscious mind of the patient. A second important thing is his method of repetition. Repetition in psychology is a very useful factor, especially in the learning process. More and more, especially in recent research, its usefulness has been appreciated. It is used extensively in the business world, and advertising has built a scientific law about it. How often are we led by the constant repetition of an advertiser to try his product! It is in just the same way that one may cause the subconscious to adopt an idea. A

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very simple method,—so simple that, paradoxical as it may sound, it is very difficult. One is always prone to slide over the easy and obvious, and very often just those simple, obvious things are the very fundamentals of life. Nature seems to have derived her greatest joy in working silently and unobserved. Who has ever heard the seedling germinate or the sap flow? Who has ever taken stock of the workings of thought in the human mind, as it silently, quietly thinks the dreams that may revolutionize a universe. Thinking is such a common process,—and yet there is hardly a man in existence who can adequately say how it is done. It is such a simple, such a natural thing.

In his dealing with the subconscious, Coué's method is strictly psychological, for it is the application of a sound principle of psychology. He calls forth a state of mind among his patients that succeeds in having them

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lose all fear of disease. He inspires them with self-confidence. His method is not to have his patients get well merely by having them determine to do so, but by causing them to feel confident that their curative powers are functioning in the best possible manner. Once he succeeds in getting this idea into the subconscious mind of his patient, the cure is effected.

CHAPTER XII

A SÉANCE WITH COUÉ

To see M. Coué enter a room crowded with patients, each anxious to tell his distressing symptoms, many revealing by their obvious deformities or useless members what their needs are, is to feel at once his personal power and his reservoir of hope and enthusiasm. The daily repetition of his great task of hearing troubles and patiently explaining them away, which would soon wear out a person of ordinary vitality, has no terrors for him. He throws off weariness as lightly as the plow turns off the sod from the furrow. He displays some of the energy of radium, which constantly gives off its emanations of power without any measurable diminution of strength. Once, in response to a patient who com-

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plained of fatigue, M. Coué quickly retorted:

“Feel tired? Well, so do I. There are days when it tires me to receive people, but I receive them just the same, and all day long. Do not say I cannot help it. One can always overcome oneself.”

As soon as M. Coué arrives, he greets the group. No sign of ennui is displayed on his face as he takes in this distressing sight which has come to him daily for twenty years. The unceasing stream of the miserable does not even momentarily stagger him. His enthusiasm is limitless. Almost arrived at the normal end of life, he continues to restore the life and wasted energies of others.

As he takes up the day's work, his manner is brisk, cheerful, radiant. He makes the round of the room, speaking to each one, listening to each one. No story of suffering casts him down. His attitude in the face of each is serene, even confident and

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jolly. There is always a twinkling smile ready to be evoked. He jokes with the patients. He banters them. He refuses to take disease seriously or lugubriously. He lightly ridicules their complaints. He will not hear of symptoms.

“Oh, Madame, not so many details, I beg you!” he protests laughingly. “By looking for details you create them, and you would want a list a yard long to contain all your maladies. As a matter of fact, it is the mental outlook which is wrong. Well, make up your mind it is going to be better and it will be so. It’s as simple as the Gospel.”

Always, whenever he finds someone in acute pain he dispels it in his usual way by having the patient sit quietly, relaxed, perhaps touching the painful area, and repeating rapidly after him: “*Ca passe, ça passe, ça passe, ça passe——*”

As first seen thus at work, M. Coué seems almost to have a com-

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mand over pain and disease. He says it will pass, and it passes. He says, "You will be better," and you are better. Once he left his quiet home in Nancy to journey to Paris—a rare excursion for one so devoted to the unfortunates who seek him out. The crowds flocked to him,—some skeptical, some ready to believe anything. The sick and lame dogged his heels. Nearly all were relieved; many were instantly cured. He went to London to deliver a lecture, and set all England by the ears with his remarkable demonstrations of drugless healing. And everything he accomplishes quietly, naturally, with almost childlike simplicity.

One day, during a séance, there was a little stir near the door. We were seated in the hall and saw plainly that a man was being brought in by some persons in a hand-basket. He was very ill with asthma. They brought him into the room and M. Coué said:

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"Why did you not come up the steps?"

There are three or four steps leading to M. Coué's home.

The man panted: "I could not."

M. Coué then took his hand and said:

"Walk down the steps with me."

When they reached the pavement M. Coué said again:

"Now I want you to go up the steps alone."

"But I cannot do it," replied the man.

M. Coué again assured him that he could do it and had him repeat many, many times, "I can go up those steps; I can go up those steps."

In less than five minutes he walked up the steps, showed some exertion when he entered the hall, and rested awhile. M. Coué had him repeat it. Thereupon the man walked down the steps, coming up again with far less exertion. Always before each new trial, he said: "I can go up and down

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these steps easily." This action he repeated three times during the afternoon, with intervals of rest.

The next time he came to the clinic he was walking altogether without support, and was showing no signs of difficulty in breathing. I saw him on several occasions after that, and he told me that he had no difficulty whatever after the first efforts.

CHAPTER XIII

COUÉ AND DIVINE HEALING

IN his various clinics M. Coué has conquered cases of paralysis, tuberculosis, asthma, anaemia, stuttering, enteritis, gout, dyspepsia, eczema and neurasthenia in all its manifestations. The crippled have thrown away their crutches and walked for the first time, sometimes after a single treatment. So amazing are some of his results, so great is the joy instantly felt by those relieved, and by them infectiously communicated to astonished witnesses, that it is not surprising that M. Coué himself is hailed as the healer, the source of power that accomplishes these cures.

Christian Scientists, when they achieve similar results, assert that it is divine healing. Those in charge of Catholic shrines such as Lourdes and Ste. Anne de Beaupré say that it

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is God working through the intercession of particular saints in special localities that produces the marvelous results. Hindoo healers have claimed magical or religious powers to cure, in similar fashion. Even the proof of Christ's own divinity is sometimes asserted on the strength of the miracles of healing which He performed.

The popular mind is thoroughly prepared to believe that divine power can produce particular cures, that the Deity does sometimes take note of, and miraculously heal individuals, and that the possession, therefore, by a human being, of power to effect cures in an unexplained fashion without material aid is in itself proof of his possessing some superhuman, spiritual force.

On this account, most people, when convinced that M. Coué's method does cure, assume that he has some special power in himself. Many hail him as a divine agent, and

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it is easy to believe him a person such as might be selected for the exercise of peculiar forces. His venerable sprightliness, his sinister joy in doing good, his gleeful, chuckling attitude in the face of the most discouraging maladies, cause him to appear a little affected by some kind of madness. Why should he, an old man, have been doing this sort of thing for twenty years without losing his excited enthusiasm in it? Why should he be so removed from the ordinary motives of ordinary human beings?

“Perhaps it is profitable to him?” the skeptic might ask.

But not at all. He takes no fees. He not only demands no money, but even refuses to accept any. He lives simply and takes no pleasures beyond early morning labors in the garden, and his long hours of work with his patients. His time is taken up to the extent of fifteen to sixteen hours a day. “I have never seen Coué refuse to give a treatment at however

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awkward the hour the subject may have asked for it," says one admirer. He has subscribed his private means, opened his own house, and devoted every waking minute of his time to this miraculous healing of the sick. They come to him, and he gives of himself, taking nothing in return. He is thus absolutely exposed as a man of pure heart. He is caught white-handed with innocence. He is convicted, by his own actions, of being a bit touched with divinity!

No wonder that a severe critic, a Polytechnician, exclaims, "He is a power!" or that a lady asks, after seeing his cures, "Do you think there are beings who radiate influence?"

One woman, excited by the disappearance of her suffering, cried: "Oh, M. Coué, one could kneel to you. You are the merciful God!" And another corrected her, saying: "No, His messenger."

M. Coué himself attributes nothing divine or superhuman to his mar-

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velous cures. There is no mistake about his answer to that question:

“It is not the person who acts,” says Coué; “it is the method.

“I have no magnetic fluid.

“I have no influence.

“I have never cured anybody.

“My disciples obtain the same results as myself.

“Things which seem miraculous to you have a perfectly natural cause; if they seem extraordinary it is only because the cause escapes you. When you know that, you realize that nothing could be more natural.”

Not his personal power, but auto-suggestion conveyed by the subject himself, to himself, is Coué's own explanation for his cures. Auto-suggestion he defines as a sort of self-hypnotism, “the influence of the imagination upon the moral and physical being.”

“If you persuade yourself that you can do a certain thing, provided

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that thing be possible, you will do it, however difficult it may be."

To one patient Coué said: "When I tell you that you are better, you do feel better at once, don't you? Why? Because you have faith in me. Just believe in yourself and you will obtain the same result."

In his lectures Coué always explains to his patients that he possesses no healing powers; that they carry in themselves the source of their well-being. He is merely an agent to instil ideas of health into their minds.

"Autosuggestion is an instrument which you have to learn how to use, just as you would any other instrument. An excellent gun in inexperienced hands only gives wretched results, but the more skilled the hands become the more easily they place the bullets in the target.

"When certain people do not obtain satisfactory results with autosuggestion, it is either because they

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lack confidence, or because they make efforts, which is the more frequent case. To make good suggestions it is absolutely necessary to do so without effort. Conscious autosuggestion, made with confidence, with faith, with perseverance, realizes itself mathematically, within reason."

Coué, then, lays no claim to personal power, or even religious aid in effecting cures. Indeed, as we have seen, he ascribes to autosuggestion the cures for which religious sanction is asserted.

"The means employed by the healers all go back to autosuggestion," he says. "That is to say, that these methods, whatever they are—words, incantations, gestures, staging—all produce in the patient the autosuggestion of recovery."

This self-depreciation, while disappointing the enthusiasts and disarming the carpers, is well justified by the history of autosuggestion. Too many people before Coué have suc-

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ceeded by approximately the same methods for any one person to be able to assert his possession of strange, occult powers. Indeed, Coué had, in his own town of Nancy, a prototype in nearly every particular.

CHAPTER XIV

COUÉ'S PREDECESSORS IN AUTO-SUGGESTION

THE modern theory of psychotherapy owes its real birth to a little French country doctor, A. A. Liebault, who opened a public dispensary in Nancy as long ago as 1860, announcing that he would treat, free of charge, all who would submit to be hypnotized. Although ignored and scouted by his medical brethren,—for at that period hypnotism, still being more or less an occult science, was looked upon apprehensively,—for twenty-five years he treated the poorer classes practically without charge. His patients numbered about 15,000. Liebault's public spirit was quite as high as that of Coué, and his method was not dissimilar, for Coué himself began with hypnotism, and only as time went on

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found it possible to induce autosuggestion without producing sleep.

There were also other practitioners of drugless healing at Nancy,—Bernheim, Liegeois (professor of Jurisprudence) and Beaunis (professor of Physiology). They all published books on the subject. The Nancy school of investigation has been followed in France by such men as A. Voisin, Barillon, Dejerine, Luys, Cullere, Nizet, Laloy, Regnault and others, besides many more in other countries.

At the present day Coué does not stand quite alone in his practice. His assistants, especially Mlle. Kauffmant, and those in charge of the institute for the Practice of Autosuggestion in London, and above all Coué's friend and fellow investigator, Professor Charles Baudouin, of Switzerland, all perform similar works of restoration. Indeed, they all meet with excellent results. I myself was cured of a minor trouble

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through the efforts of a young English girl working with Coué.

We should not too lightly dispose of Coué, however. In spite of his own modest disclaimers, in spite of a multitude of predecessors, associates and disciples, the little, stoop-shouldered chemist of Nancy remains not only the sensation of to-day, but, with justice, the leader and the greatest name connected with autosuggestion. He, through his personality and astonishing cures, through his disinterested love of doing good for its own sake, has done much to popularize and gain adherents to his method of autosuggestion. He has succeeded in making of it not a confined, insular scientific discovery, but a universally applicable law.

His faith rests securely upon a great truth and a great service. The truth, which he was the first to make plain, was precisely the disclosure that this method was free for all to practice, if they were sufficiently in-

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terested. His service lay in his great skill in so simplifying the principles of autosuggestion that everybody in the world can understand them. Other suggestionists knowingly or unconsciously have lent themselves to the illusion that they possessed special powers, or were dealing with a technique that only the initiate ought to be allowed to practice. They kept their methods cryptic, vague, mysterious,—an exclusive possession. They would not allow any one to see the wheels go 'round. Coué, on the other hand, has made autosuggestion as simple and universal in its availability as the air we breathe. What genius it reveals, after all, to take a few simple instruments, such as a string of twenty knots, a doggerel of twelve words, and two or three easy affirmations, and to create out of them a system of drugless medicine that has the world at respectful attention! If Coué's cures are not magical, his personal methods are.

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The hardest thing for most people to understand about Couéism is that there isn't more of it. The sole tenet in the system is the deliberately adopted belief that, whatever ails you, you are getting better. The sole means of forming that belief is to put the affirmation to work in your subconscious mind, with the expectation that the subconscious mind will carry the belief out into actuality while you are occupied with other things. The sole means of putting that belief to work is to din it into the mind by tireless assertion at those times of day when the will is most quiescent, and when the fancy is most credulous.

CHAPTER XV

OTHER APPLICATIONS FOR AUTO-SUGGESTION

So far we have treated autosuggestion insofar as it is used in particular conditions, specific infirmities. If, however, one desires a general suggestion for well-being, in digestion, other bodily functions and sleep, M. Coué has a routine for that—a statement which he himself recites before his patients at the end of a séance. He has them sit quietly, relaxed, with their eyes closed, while he mutters over them a long suggestion about the healthy functioning of every part of the body and mind. The effect he secures is invariably an immediate lifting of the spirits of those who hear it.

For particular maladies, as we have already said, M. Coué gives assent to the formulation of specific

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statements suggesting particular improvements, but he is somewhat skeptical about the relative value of such itemizing formulae. There is always the possibility of focusing the mind on the symptom rather than on the improvement expected. Anxiety to get well may take the place of the healing belief in a cure, and thus the will is fatally brought in, and the ills complained of become more acute and vivid than ever. The safer way is to forget just what troubles one, and to feel comforted in the general belief engendered by the assertion that "Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better."

Thus M. Coué brings his method to an end just where he began it, in a sing-song of childlike simplicity, which he frankly acknowledges to be his whole system. He labors with his followers to make them accept the truth that nothing more is necessary.

Anything further introduced into

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the Coué system by himself or by anyone else is a variant of the formula, or merely an approach to the threshold of belief. There are, indeed, hurdles to be got over before the subconscious mind can accept the suggestion of daily growing better. In the minds of the skeptical, doubts must be removed, suggestibility built up, hope enkindled, faith engendered, and a desire aroused sufficient to keep the subject repeating the formula long enough for it to start its work in the subconscious.

As a means of awakening such hope and preparing the mind for belief, the Coué demonstrations are, of course, of sovereign value. Nothing succeeds like success. A visual demonstration is worth hours of argument and verbal proof. Hence, M. Coué receives his patients always in groups, in order that the more suggestible people who are most easily and quickly cured may infect by their example and convince by

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their cries of delight and astonishment the more phlegmatic individuals who scoff. Each day, along with the inquiring newcomers, finds old patients who are ready to testify and to reinforce their testimony with their hopeful attitudes that they have made, and are still making, improvements.

Furthermore, the newcomer is always given the hand-clasping test of suggestibility, which is usually effective enough to convince him.

Fortunately, however, one does not have to begin with faith in the method to sustain benefit. The subconscious mind often fashions a belief for itself out of the infection of such demonstrations and goes to work on it while the conscious mind is still wrestling with difficulties, hunting for proofs and bothering about theories. I, myself, went over to Nancy with hope, but hardly with belief.

Simple people, however, children,

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and the peasants, who flock in such numbers to the clinic, and persons of marked religious tendencies are likely to be benefited at once. They arrive prepared to believe, the formula works upon them, the demonstration convinces them, and they are cured, if not immediately, then in short order. The complete simplicity of the Coué method and its general adaptability is by such cases triumphantly demonstrated.

The more sophisticated mind, however, cannot so easily be worked upon. People of higher education and wider experience demand that results seemingly so miraculous be brought into conformity with the general laws of science. They want to see how it is possible for the mind to perform cures of maladies that have not yielded to medicine.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF AUTOSUGGESTION

The practice of Couéism is self-contained and sufficient in itself, but for those who need to go beyond, and care to follow his theory, Coué has explanations nearly as lucid and simple as the method. He has deeply investigated the nature of the subconscious or unconscious mind. There he has found certain psychological laws which seem to him to account for his surprising results. Nothing new is created by these laws, although several things are freshly stated. The scientific merit of Coué's explanation lies in his bringing together known and demonstrable principles of psychology, and his rejection of every unsound theory.

To begin with, he acknowledges his limitations. He does not attempt

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the impossible. When promising benefits, he always says, "providing this thing be possible." "You are capable of accomplishing perfectly well whatever you wish to do,—*on condition that it is reasonable, and whatever it is your duty to do.*" "What you say persistently and very quickly *comes to pass* (within the domain of the reasonable, of course)."

Nevertheless, Coué is very sparing of mention of the diseases or conditions that he considers it reasonable to cure. He admits that auto-suggestion cannot set broken bones, or replace severed fingers. He admits the possibility of transmitting infectious diseases. I have seen him tell a new patient, a woman, that she must first consult a physician for a morbid condition before he would consent to receive her into the group for his treatment. The best he could hope to do for a former soldier with a mutilated face was to improve his

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moral fortitude to enable him to escape the embarrassment and depression caused by his unfortunate appearance. Another former soldier, shell-shocked, was considered a doubtful case. If his mind was too far gone to receive suggestions, of course, Coué admitted, autosuggestion could not cure him. The small percentage of insane, of people of arrested mental development or of unsuggestible temperaments are also ruled out as outside the range of his ministrations.

For the rest, however, Coué accepts no handicaps. He has seen improvements in so many apparently incurable maladies when they have been faced with confidence, that he confronts them all with the sovereign remedy, which *is* confidence. A jaunty self-assurance in the presence of disease is his manner, because it is also his cure.

To one patient he says: "You tell me you have attacks of nerves every

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week. Well, from to-day you are going to do what I tell you and you will cease to have them."

To another: "And you, Monsieur, your varicose ulcer is already better."

To a third: "Ah, you have glaucoma, Madame. I cannot absolutely promise to cure you of that, for I am not sure that I can. That does not mean that you cannot be cured, for I have known it to happen in the case of a lady of Chalon-sur-Saone and another of Lorraine." Or again: "You say that you have suffered for forty years? It is none the less true that you can be cured to-morrow, on condition, naturally, of your doing exactly what I tell you to do, in the way I tell you to do it."

Is such optimism then, unscientific? Does the note sound strained? Perhaps so, if one demand of Coué the reticence of a diagnostician making what he calls a *prognosis*. The specialist, in his desire never to be

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found to have overstated the prospects of cure, usually makes so gloomy a forecast that he gives the patient a case of melancholy that has to be dealt with before his original trouble can be tackled. In a scant proportion of cases, Coué's happy predictions may prove to have been overdrawn; in all the rest they have been, themselves, the means of bringing themselves to pass.

All successful physicians nowadays recognize this fact,—that an optimistic attitude toward a disease is the first essential for a cure. The most orthodox medical people are placing more and more reliance upon natural, self-corrective factors and less and less upon medicines.

Dr. Richard Cabot, for instance, in his "Layman's handbook on medicine," which deserves to be read alongside of Coué, says, "There is this consoling fact about disease, viz: that it usually gets well of itself, if given half a chance. Many a vic-

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tory over germs is so easily won that we never experience any illness at all. Traces of struggle are left in the tissues, but the patient never knows it. When the attack is forcible enough to make us aware of disease, we try to aid nature. By rest, diet, nursing or surgery, we clear the way for Nature's army of Restoration.

"Occasionally we take a more decisive part. In eight diseases—malaria, chlorosis, myxedenia, syphilis, diphtheria, latent tetanus, sunstroke, hookworm and a few other tropical diseases—what we do may really be called cure. In 270 (odd) other diseases as listed in text-books of medicine, nature, with some help from our hygiene, can usually do the work. It is only in cancer and a few other maladies—most of them rare—that nature does little or nothing for our restoration to health.

"In most cases, then, it is a winning fight that we enter when we

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contribute our tiny strength to aid the colossal and beneficent ingenuity of nature's sanitation. What we do is vastly worthwhile because it tries to imitate and in some degree to supplement the ever-active Power not ourselves that makes for health."

This is the word of a great physician on the staff of Harvard University, and formerly head of Massachusetts General Hospital — that drugs can cure eight diseases, and out of 300 cases nature cures 272.

What Cabot calls "Nature" Coué more specifically calls "the subconscious." "Nature," so far as it is in *us*, of course, is our vital processes—the unconscious growth, decay, movement, elimination and chemical change, that goes on unceasingly, and usually without feeling, in our internal organs and tissues. It is not exactly conscious, as we well know, and yet it is presided over and directed by a system of nerves that

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have their ultimate origin and endings in the brain. It is related to consciousness, we also know, because what we do and feel consciously affects it adversely or beneficially.

The proof of the influence of conscious feeling upon the hidden undertow of nature, which is the unconscious, is borne in upon us in a thousand ways. Bad news of sickness unnerves us, quite as if we had taken something deleterious into our stomachs. A mere thought reaches our vital organs and throws them out of kilter. Some people, if brought to the top of a high building grow dizzy and sicken at the mere sight. A change of scene—travel and excitement—are often prescribed by physicians as a cure for nervous diseases and even functional derangements. If asked to toe a crack on the floor, any normal person can do so accurately, but only a practiced foot can safely walk a wide plank over a deep chasm. Fear disturbs

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all the functions of the body. Anger often poisons and sickens.

The conscious attitude of confidence, hope and striving is necessary to maintain health. Who knows of a case of a business man's successfully "retiring" in his old age? Either he finds other objects of endeavor connected with earlier experience, and so essentially keeps going, or else he rapidly goes to pieces and early falls a victim to disease and death.

A man who has never known a sick day in his life occasionally discovers, when past middle age, that he has some incurable malady, enlarged heart, cancer, or Bright's disease. The disclosure is usually fatal before the disease can work itself out. A person who has often been at death's door and rallied can stand bad news about himself more stoically, because in the recesses of his mind is the recollection of having fooled the doctors before.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FORCE OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

The subconscious, that unbeknown to us, works for our help or hurt is undeniably a tremendous force, though it is not yet sufficiently understood. However, it has been demonstrated that it often works in conjunction with the conscious mind, accepting suggestions that were first presented to the latter. It is the great storehouse of memory whence come those sudden flashes of recollection of some inconsidered incident of childhood. It is the great amphitheatre of feeling and reasoning, whence come our sudden passions, our unhidden desires or decisions to do certain things. Ideas come forth from the unconscious mind greatly elaborated, enveloped with new feelings, constructed into formidable systems out of the minute daily offer-

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ings of conscious experience. Just as the painfully slow accretions of the bodies of coral polyps under the sea ultimately build up an island such as the Bermudas, so the little acts and suggestions of health or sickness accumulate under the surface of our consciousness until they finally emerge as an all-determining attitude, desire, or state of health.

It is Coué's discovery that whatever idea is presented to the unconscious with an attitude of belief is accepted as reality and gradually realizes itself in the unconscious. Hence his constant mission of favorable suggestions to the unconscious. In his view, it is idle to try to uproot ideas in the unconscious. Whenever the will and the imagination (the belief to which we give consent) come into conflict, the imagination invariably wins the day. For the imagination is simply that which, for us, is reality. The will is simply what we feel or desire about it,

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which cannot, of course, remove it. The only way to replace our subconscious sense of reality is to implant new belief by the process of autosuggestion. Thus he comes back to the simple reiteration of "I am getting better and better" to build up new islands of consciousness under the surface of our knowing. The simplicity of the Coué system, therefore, is not alone justified by its results, but profoundly guaranteed by the logic of science.

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CREDO

I believe in the earnestness of purpose of Emile Coué, in his devotion to and sincerity in his work; in his great kindness to all patients, whether they are in the highest or more humble paths of life; in his affirmations of recovery to all, when he believes a cure is possible; in his statement that he has limitations and that many cures cannot be effected by him; in his assertion that dread and fear are the great hindrances to health; in the spiritual thought that his patients receive from him, renewing their interest in life and their courage to go on under the most adverse conditions; in fact, I believe in all his methods, all his attitude toward sickness, sorrow or distress. I believe that in all this he approaches very near to the Great Comforter, for he certainly lives up to all His precepts. He epitomizes every word and deed of the command—"freely ye have received, freely give."





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